Khadi Stocks

Reg. No. B3092

HARIJAN

(FOUNDED BY MAHATMA GANDHI)

Editor: K. G. MASHRUWALA

VOL. XVI. No. 27 AHMEDABAD — SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 1952 TWO ANNAS

THE FINAL SHAPE OF THE BOMBAY SALES-TAX

The Bombay Government has favoured me with a copy of the Sales-Tax Bill as it has emerged in its final shape, and drawn my attention to the principal points of difference between the first draft and the final form. They are:

1. In respect of the Special Tax, the limit of exemption from it has been raised from a turnover of more than Rs 1,000/- to that of more than Rs 5,000/-. The special tax is to be collected at one stage only at the first stage of sale; and as the majority of small dealers selling the goods liable to the special tax will mostly purchase them from the bigger importers and manufacturers who will have paid the tax on the first sales, they will not be troubled by the special tax. They will be liable to the general turnover tax of 3 pies per rupee, only if their total turnover exceeds Rs 30,000/- in a year. If their turnover is less than this amount they will not be called upon to pay even the general turnover tax. The Government says that the lower limit of Rs 5,000/- for the special goods has, however, been kept for reducing evasion by dishonest dealers to the minimum particularly in regard to high priced goods.

2. In respect of general tax, my attention has been drawn to Schedule I of the Bombay Bill to show that most of the necessaries of the poorer classes have been exempted from tax. The Government claims that the Schedule of Exemptions under the Bombay Bill is the largest among all States. My special attention is drawn to the fact that *ghani* oil, khaddar of all kinds and articles of khaddar, and handloom mill yarn cloth not exceeding Rs 1-8-0 a yard, have been exempted with a view to give relief to the poorer classes in the rural areas as well as to encourage cottage industries in regard to these items.

Incidentally, I am informed that the decision to change over from the single point tax on last sales to a multi-point general tax was taken by Government during the time when Shri Vaikunth L. Mehta was the Finance Minister. He had no doubt at one time expressed himself against the multi-point system of tax but the extensive evasion which the single-point tax made possible, had convinced him that the tax required to be changed to a multi-point tax.

I am glad to note that my observation that I was satisfied that the Bombay Government had introduced this change after a careful consideration is further justified. I am glad that the Government has made these changes.

No doubt, the agitation of the mercantile community as well as the criticisms of the Opposition have also had a share in getting these changes made. They are also entitled to take credit for them.

But I advise the merchants not to prolong this agitation any longer, and make of it a power politics campaign. It must be watched as a new experiment and the results awaited. At any rate, I strongly advise small merchants not to involve themselves in this agitation.

Some one will charge me of having suddenly changed sides. Why did I not think over it when I rushed my first article to the Press? I do not repent having done so. My first article was written in the interest of the peasant and the lower middle class; this too is in their interest. For my article has also had its share in guarding their interests.

My ultimate desire is that the method of raising revenue from Sales Tax should be abolished altogether. The extra revenue should be raised by a special surcharge on income for the benefit of each State. But this is a larger question, which I cannot discuss at this stage.

I understand that my article was freely made use of by the mercantile community in support of their agitation. I do not blame it for that. It was natural for it to do so. But I understand that at the same time, they have linked their agitation with an attack on the Prohibition policy. A correspondent says that the agitators did not say what my views are on that. Was this proper? I must say that on the question of Prohibition, I am entirely in agreement with the policies of Shri Morarji Desai and Shri C. Rajagopalachari.

Wardha, 23-8-'52 K. G. MASHRUWALA

ALL-INDIA BHOODAN PROGRESS

Dear Friend,

Soon after the Sevapuri Conference, I had written a letter to you on the 30th of April, 1952, explaining to you the steps that we have to take to see that we carry into effect the resolution adopted on the *bhoodan* movement. It is now about three months since I wrote that letter. I have given a brief report of the work that has been done during the past three months in the leaflet *Progress of the Bhoodan-Yajna.*

I feel that detailed information on some aspects of the progress of the work will be useful to all of us. After the Sevapuri Conference, Shri Vinobaji toured the remaining districts of U.P. Up-to-now, he has received above three lakh acres of land in U.P. Some villages like Mangroth, Janua-Pashchim etc., donated all their land to Vinobaji and thus became inspiring examples of the solution of the land problem that we seek through the *Bhoodan-Yajna.* Shri Vinobaji will stay in Banaras during the rainy season, and start for Bihar on the 12th of September. And in the last week of February, all of us Sevaks of the Sarvodaya Samaj will meet in Bihar for the Sarvodaya Sammelan. The workers of U.P. have decided in their meeting of the 20th of July, 1952, held at Banaras, that they will see that U.P.'s first instalment of 5 lakh acres is donated to the *Bhoodan-Yajna* before Vinobaji leaves U.P.

I have attended, during the past three months, conferences of workers in the Karnatak, Andhra, Tamilnad, Kerala, Hyderabad, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi provinces. All these conferences formulated plans for the work of the *Bhoodan-Yajna* in their respective provinces, and in most of these provinces, Provincial *Bhoodan-Yajna* committees have been set up. Committees have still to be set up in the Provinces of Bombay and Mysore.

Shri Dhotreji presided over the conference of the workers of Bengal that was held at Hatuganj (24 Parganas). He also presided over a workers' conference that was held at Gauhati in Assam. At these conferences Dhotreji explained how the movement could be organized and popular response secured through the proper approach.

In Madhya Pradesh, Shri Dada Dharmadhikari and Shri Dadabhai Naik, Convenor of the Provincial Bhoodan Samiti, covered hundred miles in a village to village trek, and in ten days, secured donations that totalled 310 acres. At present Shri Dada Dharmadhikari is in Bihar, attending the district conference of workers, explaining the background and the rationale of the *bhoodan* movement and enthusing the workers to make an all-out effort in this cause. It has also been decided that Shri Dada Dharmadhikari will now give first place to the work of *bhoodan* and devote more and more of his time for it.

It is clear from the work that has gone on for the last three months that the *Bhoodan-Yajna* has gripped the imagination of people of all the schools of thought in the country.

Another good result of the movement has been that the sense of frustration that had crept into the minds of the people, and more especially of the workers, after the advent of Swaraj, has begun to disappear like mist before the morning sun. It was wrongly expected by some that once Swaraj was won, the Governments by themselves would do all that was necessary for the welfare of the people. For various reasons, we found that though the Government succeeded beyond expectation in some of the tasks to which it addressed itself, it was not able to fulfil what could reasonably be expected of it in the domestic and economic spheres, which in fact, were the spheres that most affected the people. The result was that constructive workers became critical and dissatisfied with the Government. The *bhoodan* movement has shown them that it is neither desirable nor necessary to wait in helplessness, on the Government, believing that it alone can tackle and solve the burning problems of the people. It has shown that there is an effective non-violent way in which the people can solve their problems on their own strength. And it has been proved that the people are willing to tread this path. The *bhoodan* movement has thus enabled the workers as well as the people to have a glimpse of the moral and spiritual potentiality that lies locked up in them.

But it will have to be admitted that though the feeling of frustration has been considerably reduced, workers do not as yet feel the urge, the irresistible desire to plunge into the work of the *bhoodan* movement with the same intensity as is necessary for the fulfilment of such a great task. One of the reasons for this is the fact that these friends have not yet fully grasped the revolutionary potentialities of the *bhoodan* movement, nor realized the urgent need to find a non-violent solution of the land problem.

As far as I can see, there is yet another reason for the reluctance to take the plunge. Workers feel hesitant, feel a kind of nervousness in approaching the people with the message of *bhoodan*, since they are doubtful about the response that they would get from the people. The rank and file of our workers seem to think that it is only people like Shri Vinobaji, who is listened to as the First Satyagrahi, as a man who has sacrificed his all at the altar of service, as a saint, as a close associate and disciple of Gandhiji, who can hope to get such an enthusiastic response from the people, and that common workers like us hardly expect any response. It is, therefore, often asked "When will Vinobaji come to our province? When will you come?" and it is said that though committees may be set up and some propaganda work may be done etc., the actual work of *bhoodan* can be started in the provinces only when Shri Vinobaji or somebody of the same nature and stature goes to the province. It seems

to me that this is a wrong way of thinking, and that it is necessary for us to remove the feeling that only a saint or a leader can hope to get response for the message of *bhoodan*. It is the fundamental faith of a Satyagrahi that there is within every man an all-conquering and inexhaustible source of moral power, and that an appeal to this moral consciousness even in your opponent can convert him to your cause. We should then have faith in this power that is latent in all of us, and devote ourselves to the work of *bhoodan* to the extent that our faith and our strength warrant. We should realize that it is only thus, by right action that one can grow in moral stature. In the very nature of things, this growth can only be slow though sure. In the meanwhile, all of us can contribute our mite even as the cowherds of Krishna helped him to lift the Gowardhan, and then we will see, even as Shri Vinobaji saw, that, as he always tells us, the people are the *kalpavriksha*, the divine tree that fulfils your desires. You are given what you seek in its shade.

I also find that the constructive workers are caught up in the works for which they have already accepted responsibility, and are facing the dilemma, — whether to leave off or limit their present responsibilities and to plunge into the work of *bhoodan* or to continue where they are and to contribute whatever help they can from where they are.

Though the importance of constructive work is beyond question, and though it is true that what we are today and whatever will be tomorrow, depends on our constructive work, I want to say in all humility that if we are to maintain the power and glory of the constructive programme, and to fulfil the main purpose for which it was fashioned, we will have to try and solve the burning problems of the people with the help of non-violent methods. We can, therefore, say that the land-problem is such a burning problem and that the fortunes of constructive workers are dependent on the success with which we solve that problem with the non-violent method of *bhoodan*. Shri Vinobaji himself has referred to this many times. Let us all ponder over this in all earnestness, and see that we play our part in this great movement. It is, therefore, my humble but firm opinion that all of us should make it our chief concern to see that the target of 25 lakh acres which we fixed at Sevapuri is reached before April, 1954.

In addition to constructive workers, there are many brothers and sisters in the towns and villages who have faith in Sarvodaya, who try to mould their lives in accordance with the tenets of Sarvodaya and who have contributed their share to the progress of the *bhoodan* movement. It is their duty too to see that they help in advancing the cause of *bhoodan* in their own circles and areas. Let them not hesitate for fear that some critics may ridicule them and question their right to preach the message of *bhoodan* as long as they themselves have not sacrificed all their possession in the cause. To such critics let them reply: "Yes, I cannot ask you to sacrifice your all, as long as I have not done so myself, nor am I doing so. But I have contributed my share, and I am only asking you to contribute your share". When a house is on fire, my duty does not end with throwing a bucketful of water into the conflagration; I have to appeal to every one in the neighbourhood to join in the attempt to put out the fire.

Brothers and sisters, wherever we are, and whatever our station in society, whether we are constructive workers or just honest men who care for the good of our people, let every one who stands for Sarvodaya immediately set about doing his utmost for this *Bhoodan-Yajna*.

In conclusion, let me say one thing more. Since the *bhoodan* movement is our solution for the land problem it is natural that we have concentrated most of our attention on it. But we must know that the equitable distribution of land brought about by *bhoodan* by itself will not be adequate to solve the problem of finding employment for all or to lead to the establishment of a Sarvodaya order of society. The second half of the Sevapuri resolution, that asks us to boycott the products of centralized industries as far as the needs for food and clothing are concerned, and to take the vow of Swadeshi, i.e. to use the products of village industries, is a pointer towards the further steps that we will have to take in this direction. I therefore appeal to all our friends to educate public opinion on the latter half of the Sevapuri resolution as well.

Yours sincerely,

July '52 SHANKARRAO DEO

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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Post Box 105, AHMEDABAD

HARIJAN

Aug. 30 1952

KHADI STOCKS

I understand that large stocks of Khadi have accumulated in U.P., Bihar, Madras etc. Their sales have progressively diminished since the attainment of Independence.

The periodical accumulation of Khadi stocks has not, indeed, been a rare phenomenon in the history of Khadi, since the revival of this industry under the leadership of Gandhiji. Various methods to dispose them of had to be again and again organized by Khadi organizers. I believe there must be several members among the various ministries of our Central and State Governments, who have, at some time or another, gone from place to place with Khadi pieces on their shoulders to sell them to rich people. The rich did not always purchase Khadi, because they realized it to be the right Indian Political Economy, but simply because they could not say 'No' to these leaders. Even some of the leaders were not convinced of its economic aspect, but felt that it was a good political weapon against the British, and was the price which must be paid to Gandhiji for getting his leadership in the Congress.

Disposal of Khadi by such artificial methods is by no means a pleasant performance. During his confinement in the Aga Khan Palace, Gandhiji ruminated over the Khadi problem deeply and arrived at a new conclusion: *He who wears Khadi must spin*; *he who spins must wear Khadi.* The former half applied to the consumer, the latter half to the producer. For, somehow, though Khadi had been going on for about twenty years and plenty of it had been purchased and sold, and though its use was compulsory upon all Congressmen, the fact remained that few consumers of Khadi realized the necessity of themselves taking to regular spinning and few spinners and weavers realized the necessity of wearing what they themselves laboured after to produce. The former assumed the role of patrons and the latter that of caterers to them. It became clear to Gandhiji, as it should be to others also, that Khadi could never establish itself in India's economic organization by this method of producing and distributing it. So, he determined to establish a moral and permanent relation between the consumer and the producer by stipulating that the consumer shall demonstrate his faith in the economics of Khadi by personally contributing to its production and the producer by not spinning for wages alone, but also for his personal consumption.

No doubt, the ultimate ideal of Gandhiji was that so far as the clothing wants of a family were concerned all the processes ancillary to spinning should be done at home, weaving alone being got done by artisans; but he also realized the importance of Khadi production for supplementing the income of the poor. So, he did not stipulate that Khadi shall be exchanged only against self-spun yarn. He demanded only a token payment in the form of yarn, and allowed the balance to be paid in cash. To add to this, the Charkha Sangh allowed the yarn to be repurchased by the contributor in order to enable him to get it woven for himself.

But, barring a few exceptions, spinning-mindedness had not permeated among the big or small politicians of the Congress. Gandhiji was fond of constantly quoting with approval Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's description of Khadi as "the livery of Freedom." As I view it now, it is clear that the description, though not so meant originally, became a description limiting the place of Khadi in the Congress. That is, the Congress adopted Khadi as a *livery* of Freedom and not as its *mufti*. Hence, Freedom having been obtained, the necessity of wearing the livery, did not appear imperative. It need be put on only on ceremonial occasions.

As this was the attitude of even many a leader of the Congress, it was not surprizing that the non-availability of Khadi without payment in part in the form of self-spun yarn was not appreciated by its politicians. A vigorous protest was raised against this 'hurdle' in the purchase of genuine Khadi. As Gandhiji did not yield to it, at first uncertified Khadi was silently allowed to become 'the livery'. Though the number of Congressmen enlarged year after year, certified Khadi Bhandars found it extremely difficult to dispose of Khadi on Gandhiji's conditions, and many of them had to be closed or greatly reduced in size. It was not impossible to get spinners and weavers on Gandhiji's conditions, but since Congressmen ceased to be its patrons, the production had to be heavily reduced year after year.

Even the sharp acumen of Pandit Jawaharlalji could not appreciate Gandhiji's new Khadi policy. It seems that shortly after Gandhiji's death he once went to the Khadi Bhandar of Srinagar during one of his visits to Kashmir and, failing to get Khadi there, got much irritated, and expressed it in a letter to a leader in the Khadi organization. In the meanwhile the Congress Constitution had also been radically revised. It was so framed as to suggest that its large body of active members would need Khadi, and if the A.I.S.A. did not rise to the occasion, it would be blamed of being unreasonably perverse and unresponsive. So at the Sevagram Conference, which met shortly after Gandhiji's death, Vinoba advised the A.I.S.A. to relax in some manner the rule of selling Khadi only against part payment in the form of yarn. The A.I.S.A. accordingly considered the matter and resolved that while the main body should not itself make any change in the working of its own *bhandars*, it should allow

certified Khadi *bhandars* to sell Khadi against cash alone, so that Congressmen need not complain that genuine Khadi was not easily available to them. It even helped suitable *bhandars* to be opened in lieu of its own. As some of the provincial branches of the A.I.S.A. — like the Gandhi Ashram in U. P. and the Bihar A.I.S.A. — had by now become autonomous independent bodies, they took free advantage of this relaxation and there was no difficulty whatever in those provinces for purchasing Khadi without compulsory spinning. The famine conditions of U. P. and Bihar and the Firka Scheme of the Madras Government, enabled the Khadi organizations in those States to expand their work of Khadi production. The Central and the State Governments supplied them with funds also for the purpose. But though production can be easily organized in a country of immense unemployment, there is no scheme for getting a steady body of purchasers. The politically-minded Congressmen have not adopted Khadi as their *mufti* and, even as their livery, they do not care to obtain genuine and unexploiting Khadi. They are prepared to deceive themselves and to deceive the public.

The result is that large Khadi stocks have accumulated in all the States mentioned above, and the workers are now at their wits' end to find how they should be disposed of. Though famine conditions still remain what they were and threaten to get intensified and extend to other areas also in the next year, how can these organizations carry on their activities, if Khadi has to compete against mill-cloth of the same varieties and there is not a regular body of customers to purchase it ?

To meet the immediate situation, the Charkha Sangh has been compelled to start its *dreary* go-round for pushing the Khadi sales. I understand that the Bombay Bhandar, the well-known and most generous 'friend-in-need' of Khadi producers under the guidance of that prince of salesmen, Shri Vithaldas Jerajani, contemplates to re-issue its scheme of 'Khadi notes', and the mufassal Charkha Sangh bodies contemplate to send their workers during the ensuing Charkha week in a walking tour in the villages roundabout their centres to popularize and sell Khadi and explain its importance in the village economy of India.

As an emergent measure, these methods will have to be adopted. But it is obvious that they do not show the way to the long-time solution of India's problem. The only national and long-time solution is to reserve the production of cloth as a village industry. Even in the village, it should not be allowed to become a factory-producer. It should be produced by methods which will allow every able-bodied and needy person to take part in it. If this is assured, it does not matter if fuel or electricity is available to all and is used to help rotation of the Charkha or movement of the loom to save the physical fatigue or a part of the time of the workers. No cloth, or a tempting substitute thereof, which can be produced in villages should be allowed to be produced elsewhere and by other methods.

Like Prohibition and Education, this should form a part of the nation's Directive, so that it ceases to be a party programme. Khadi is not the hobby of a political party or of Gandhian faddists, or of a 'go-back' organization. A party that does not accept this proposition does not know its country. Any interest that resists this, retards the country's welfare.

This implies, without saying, that Shri Rajaji's demand that *dhotis* and *sarees* should be reserved for handlooms is a very modest one, and must be accepted *in toto* unhesitatingly. It will be one of the first steps in the right direction.

Wardha, 20-8-'52 K. G. MASHRUWALA

THE SUBJECT OF FERTILIZERS

I

(*By Ashvin Mehta*)

The following are a few extracts, from the report of proceedings on the symposium on "Chemicals for Agriculture", held on 6th and 7th July, 1951, at the National Chemical Laboratory, Poona 7.

1. Nature of the Soil

Dr. S. P. Raychowdhury (Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi), "...... stressed that *the nature of the soil* is an important factor in deciding the response of fertilizers to crop growth......He also presented experimental data to prove that there was no truth in contention that the quality of the crop and its nutritional value are lowered when grown on chemical fertilizers. In view of the short supply of fertilizers in India, their use mainly on *irrigated soils,* with an *assured water supply,* was recommended by him."

2. Inadequate Knowledge of Soil Scientists

Dr. C. K. N. Nair (National Chemical Laboratory, Poona), "............criticized the haphazard characterization of our great soil groups based on colour etc. and stated that *even the broad physical and chemical properties of these soil groups were not adequately known to our soil scientists.* Recommendation for fertilizer practices without this basic knowledge were in many instances misleading........Dr. Nair then briefly discussed the *importance of trace elements* in Indian agriculture, with particular reference to Boron, Manganese and Copper, and stressed that it is essential that India should pay attention to the status of these elements in our soils......Boron exerted considerable influence in the absorption and availability of various other plant nutrients...."

3. Fertilizer Usage

Mr K. M. Mehta (Agricultural Chemist, Government of Rajasthan) stated "that more crop and soil data were required before a proper scheme for fertilizer usage could be recommended in India."

4. Combination with Organic Manure

According to Dr. J. K. Basu (College of Agriculture, Poona), "two of the main considerations involved in a proper system of application of fertilizers to dry land were (1) critical moisture limitations and (2) soil structure.......He emphasized the need for a land use classification system......He cited result of his experiments which showed that *unless soil structure was improved*, the application of fertilizers was not bound to give adequate response. *Best results* were obtained when *a combination of inorganic and organic fertilizers* were added in conjunction with traces of Boron, Manganese, and Zinc."

5. Combination with Organic Manure

Mr K. V. Gopala Iyer (Sugar Cane Breeding Institute, Coimbatore), "expressed the opinion that ammonium sulphate *in conjunction with* heavy organic manures would greatly step up India's cane production...."

6. Combination of Various Factors

Dr. H. L. Richardson maintained that "chemical fertilizers would secure a large increase in food production from Indian soils, *provided the water-supply was adequate*......He advocated a greatly enlarged extension service, field experiment to *study nutrient requirements of individual soil and crops*, more fertilizer factories, and adequate arrangements for distribution.... He thought there was need for a few complex field experiment on long-term problems.....The kind of experiment required *careful planning and intricate experimental designs*.......Dr. Richardson concluded his paper by saying that really high level of crop production could be achieved under *suitable crop rotation, bulky local manures* and chemical fertilizers."

7. Rotation with Fodder Legume

Dr. S. V. Desai (Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi), stated that "it had been shown that at least one crop in three should consist of fodder legume to build up soil fertility. ....This treatment would bring enormous *fixation of atmospheric nitrogen* and build up organic matter of good quality in the soil."

8. Misuse of Fertilizers

Mr A. P. A. Brittomuthunayagom (Central Research Institute, Travancore University), "..........stated that a wise use of fertilizers would only build up the fertility of soil........ Majority of *our farmers knew very little about proper fertilizer practices*..........The most *common misuse* was the application of one plant food constituent in excess and another in very insufficient amounts......The efficient utilization of nitrogen depends on proper nitrogen-potassium ratio. *Another misuse* of fertilizers was their application without necessary safeguards...... such as use of ammonium sulphate without complementary liming......The use of superphosphate on acid soils rich in soluble iron and alluminium, was another instance of misuse...."

9. Misuse of Fertilizers

Dr. B. K. Mukerji (Sugar Cane Research, Shahjahanpur, U. P.) observed that "increased yield of sugar cane....were showing *distinct downward trend* in successive years, after about the first three years, and the deterioration was most pronounced in the case of the heaviest application of nitrogen as ammonium sulphate...... The system of rotation followed in U. P. sugar plantations was unsuited for cane production.... It reduced the total bacterial population......."

"Dr. Mukerji suggested that the *use of ammonium sulphate......could only be successful* when the soil was properly buffered with organic matter and bases. It was undesirable to apply more than a third of the crop requirement of nitrogen in the form of ammonium sulphate ...."

10. Superiority of Organic Manures

Dr. B. Viswanath, (Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India), "discussed the question whether chemical fertilizers could improve and maintain the fertility of the soil, as measured by crop yield....He quoted results from Rothamsted (England) to show that *organic manures were definitely superior* in all respects to *purely* chemical fertilizers......*The author presented data..........to show that without the use of fertilizers*, the *Indian farmer and Nature maintained the system of agriculture at a production level which did not compare unfavourably with the levels in other countries which used fertilizers and modern methods.* For Indian conditions chemical fertilizers were important but *not all important*.

"Dr. Viswanath stated......that *chemical fertilizers* were *at their best* when the soil was adequately supplied with organic matter or when in association with organic manures........As regards *superphosphates*, the author contended that it was *not indispensable* for Indian agriculture........"

II

11. Inadequate Knowledge of Soil Scientists

Mr K. M. Mehta (Agricultural Chemist, Government of India, Rajasthan) stated "that more crop and soil data were required before a proper scheme for fertilizer usage could be recommended in India."

12. Humus

Dr. R. D. Rege (Sugar Cane Research Scheme, Padegaon, Poona)........"concluded that the *humus content of the soil* was *the only factor* essential for getting best advantage from chemical fertilizers......"

13. Soil Humus and Earth-Worms

Dr. G. J. Fowler (Bangalore) "discussed the importance of biological school of thought which was concerned more with what was known as 'fertility' than agriculture......and attached *great significance* to *soil humus*........The *activity of earth-worms* was an important factor

in building up humus and that ammonium sulphate from this point of view was destructive in its effect."

14. Ammonium Sulphate

Dr. J. K. Basu stated that "ammonium sulphate was a very useful fertilizer *if* adequate precautions were taken to maintain *proper soil structure.*"

15. Earth-worm and Ammonium Sulphate

Dr. C. K. N. Nair (Chairman) said that ....."while *no one denied the importance of soil organic matter or of earth-worms* in building up good soil structure, he deprecated the attitude on the part of some of our soil chemists to attach imaginary importance to comparatively trivial things......He said *one could make earth-worm thrive* in great abundance in a soil receiving ammonium sulphate, *provided* other conditions conducive to their existence were adequately met, such as proper *soil acidity range, presence of enough organic matter and trace elements.....*"

16. Insufficient Availability of Ammonium Sulphate

According to Dr. R. D. Bose (Indian Central Sugar Cane Committee, New Delhi), "if the total area under crops in U. P. alone were to receive an average annual supplement of 1 cwt. of ammonium sulphate per acre, over two million tons would be required or about six times the estimated annual production of Sindri.......... In planning for future, it was *essential to think of fertilizers*, not in terms of thousands of tons, but of *millions of tons*......It was necessary to provide sound technical guidance and advice to the inexperienced farmers....*Ad hoc* attempts ....often resulted in failures."

17. Steamed Bone Flour

Mr K. N. Moorthy (Central Laboratories for Scientific and Industrial Research, Hyderabad) said that, "due to the *shortage of sulphuric acid* it was imperative that we should work out alternative means of converting bone-phosphate to plant available forms.....*Steamed bone flour* was a more concentrated fertilizer than super-phosphate, and could be made available to farmer at cheaper prices, because of costly bye-products obtained......"

18. Superphosphates and Bones

Dr. M. L. Diwan (Damodar Valley Corporation), stated that "phosphorous is the bottle-neck of India's hunger......India required approximately *10 million tons* of *super-phosphate* (20% P_2O_5) or its equivalent to provide for the annual depletion of phosphates. As against this tremendous requirement, India had *a total reserve of only a few million tons of phosphates......A useful alternative was bones....* India could produce annually 2 million tons of bone superphosphates, if this source were properly tapped."

Summary

On the presumption, that the nutritional value of crop grown on chemical fertilizers is not lowered, if not enhanced, the following conclusions can be safely made from the above extracts from the papers read in the symposium:

(1) For noteworthy increase in the food-production, *millions of tons* of artificial fertilizers will be required. Thus, for example, U. P. alone will require about 6 times the estimated annual production of Sindri Fertilizer factory, which has cost us about 200 million rupees and consumes (approximately) 0.75 million tons of gypsum per year. Our total reserve of gypsum is estimated at 85 million tons.

(2) Chemical fertilizers alone cannot constitute any permanent and effective system of agriculture.

(3) Even to get best results from chemical fertilizers humus content of the soil is of prime importance. Hence, it follows that "bulky" organic manures will be required. The mechanization of farming, minimizing the number of farm animals, should be carefully thought of, keeping this fact in mind.

(4) The importance of earth-worms in soil appears to be well recognized and these poor creatures (!) should not be forgotten, while fixing fertilizer requirements of the soil.

(5) Adequate water supply is absolutely necessary.

(6) Major, plant nutrients — nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium — should be properly balanced according to environments.

(7) Presence of trace element, like Manganese, Copper, Boron etc. as plant food, besides sulphates, phosphate and potash, is absolutely essential.

(8) Sewage irrigation is possible only in the sandy soils and it is not advisable to grow vegetables by sewage irrigation.

(9) Super-phosphates is not indispensable for Indian agriculture. If required, steamed bone flour should be prepared as

(i) it is more concentrated fertilizer than super-phosphate;

(ii) India has a total reserve of only a few million tons of phosphates;

(iii) it is cheaper than super-phosphate.

(10) Hence, naturally, all exports of bones or bone-meal should be discontinued.

(11) Fertilizer requirements vary according to different types of soils, (depending upon their acidity, structure etc.), and weather conditions. Hence, soil analysis goes together with artificial fertilizers.

(12) But, on the other hand, "even the broad physical and chemical properties of our great soil groups are not known to our soil scientists" and soil analysis is not found to be "quick and reliable". How, then, are the fertilizers to be applied? Before dumping the American 'gift' fertilizers in our villages, will it not be sensible to think of all these factors and inform our farmers regarding their proper usage?

HOLDINGS AND PROJECTS

Shri S. N. Agarwal, Convener of the Congress Parliamentary Committee on Planning, had gone to Banaras from Delhi on or about 7th July last to meet Shri Vinoba to seek his views on the land-problem. A brief summary of their talks having already appeared in the Press, a full report is published below for the information of the reader.

Q: May I know your views on co-operative farming? Do you agree with the views of the Planning Commission?

Vinoba: I have often expressed my views on co-operative farming. Almost every big town puts me this question and I have to repeat my reply. The truth is that when I bethink myself on a problem, I firmly hold my feet on earth and do not allow myself to soar in high flights in the air. I believe that if we really want to do something in the present distressful plight of the country and bring immediate relief to the poor, we should not get involved in the jugglery of words. We should understand that our country has been predominantly agricultural for at least these ten thousand years, and the people have therefore evolved a definite way of life which has become their second nature.

Having regard to this great fact, I say that the only practical and fruitful way for India is, for the present, to allow small holdings which individual families of peasants can concentrate their efforts on and produce the maximum food grains through intensive cultivation. For this purpose they should be provided with adequate irrigation facilities.

It will be of course necessary to fix a minimum of small holdings. I regard about five acres as an average size, a little more or less being allowed to suit local conditions. The U.P. Government has fixed the limit of 6½ acres. This is not a great difference. But the reason for even this difference lies in the fact that my limit is based on direct contact with the people in the course of my tour, while the U. P. Government takes decision, sitting in the Government Secretariat in Lucknow. Peasants can and in fact practise today a partial co-operation in matters such as the use of bullocks, irrigation, night-watch etc. At present this co-operation is unorganized. It needs to be properly organized.

Large Farms

I have seen a number of large farms where labourers and bullocks work for a definite period of hours and are jointly instrumental in producing agricultural crops. Both have no share in the produce. Both are set to hard work and both are fed, since without doing so they cannot work. The intellectual development and inner satisfaction of both is almost similar. Where some are regarded as 'heads' and a great many others as 'hands', the body politic faces annihilation. God has not created a few with heads alone and others with hands alone, like the demons Rahu and Ketu. We should bear this in mind in organizing our work. Otherwise, we shall demolish all other gods, no doubt, but install in their place a new god, the *Manager*. This will spell ruin for the country.

Community Projects

Q: What is your opinion about the Community Projects?

Vinoba: I had no occasion of seeing the scheme of the Community Projects. I got it only from you. I glanced through it. I happened to go to Etawah in the course of my *bhoodan* tour. I had heard of it also. The objective of the scheme is good, but I must confess that it has not much attracted me. The manufacture of articles required by the villagers and producible from the raw materials available in the village itself, should as far as possible be produced in the village itself, through the implements readily available in the rural areas.

As far as food and clothing are concerned, barring a few exceptions, almost every village should be self-sufficient. I find that this principle has been ignored in the scheme. The same old pattern of education has been accepted. Villages should be regenerated mainly with their own resources. Outside help should be so limited as to make them quite dependent upon them, and nothing should be imposed from above.

Demerits of the Scheme

My conception of an ideal village is that one in which there is a simple and beautiful garden around every home. The urine and night-soil of that home are utilized as manure. I do not find the picture of such a village in this scheme. *Bhangis* (sweepers) will remain. The master will sit on a rickshaw-cycle drawn by human beings. There is no mention of vegetable gardens. All these things are suggestive of the want of a perspective in the scheme.

On account of these defects the scheme has not enthused me. But as I said before, its objective is good. So with necessary changes if an experiment is made in a few areas and money is not squandered, there is no objection to make a few experiments.

(From Hindi) D. M.

GANDHI AND MARX
By K. G. Mashruwala
With an Introduction by Shri Vinoba
Pages viii+112 Price Re. 1/8 Postage etc. As. 5
NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
Post Box 105, AHMEDABAD

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Subscription Rates — Inland: One year, Rs. 6; Six months, Rs. 3; Foreign: One year, Rs. 8 or 14 s. or $ 2.
Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai, Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 9.